

Fingers that See

Nancy Buskett



THE SPOKANE
Spokane, Washington

Dear Nancy Buskett:

Mrs. Macy thought your newspaper account of our meeting very pleasant.

We like the story, "Fingers That See," very much. You certainly understand the hearts of blind children. I feel as if Carla and Helen are real little girls whom I have KNOWN. They are appealing little folk, and I know that other children will love them.

How profoundly true is Helen's observation that "It is a lot easier to make good things happen by thinking good."

I also love the gospel of good cheer that runs through the tale like a thread of gold.


With cordial greetings, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Signed)

HELEN KELLER.

FINGERS THAT SEE



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"and it seems like my fiddle's alive"

FINGERS THAT SEE

by

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Editor

CYNTHIA GREY

Dept.

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Nancy Bussket

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Dedicated to
My Blind and Seeing Friends
All Over the World



INTRODUCTORY



To My Friends and Readers:

This story of the blind is founded upon facts and experiences gained in part while acting as Musical Director of a School for the Blind in one of the Northern states. Of the eight teachers in the department, all were blind with the exception of myself and the orchestra leader.

Carla, Helen, Beth, and Kate will no doubt recognize themselves when their friends read them the story, as will also the well-loved Dr. Hunt, and Hans, the faithful man-about-the-place, when they peruse the pages of "Fingers That See."

Many of the sayings of the children are absolutely true, as when Helen asks: "Can people with *seeing* eyes see around a corner?"

Other messages of this book, and the books to follow, have been gained from actual contact with the seamy side of life. The trying experiences of several years' work with the blind brought about a breakdown which forced the writer to take up work in the open. Music work had to be abandoned and anything respectable

that offered a living brought forth the stern realities of the "low wage" and "girl" problem. With physicians hopeless there seemed little worth while left to live for. It was in these trying hours that the Light and Truth dawned and brought the message of this book—and the way was soon opened for my cherished life work—writing to help others.

In the position of editor of the *Cynthia Grey* department of four Northwestern daily papers the past few years has added untold wealth to the fund of knowledge already gained, and used in aiding the inexperienced in solving the problems of life. And it is to the many friends of these experiences that I now appeal to spread the gospel of good cheer, for there are many who see, and are yet blind.

If Carla's unfoldment shall add a ray of light in the lives of my little blind friends; if Helen's beautiful philosophy—"Lovin' isn't just feelings. Sometimes it's doing hard things for your beloved"—shall please, lead, inspire and direct girls, little and big, everywhere—anywhere—I will be satisfied.

NANCY BUSKETT.

Seattle, Springtime, 1914

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CHAPTER ONE

CARLA was tired. The nervous excitement that had sustained her through the day was fast ebbing away and a great limpness was taking possession of her angular body and weary brain.

When, through the persuasion of the village pastor her parents had consented that she be placed in the School for the Blind in the northern part of the state in which she lived, she had rebelled; at first she had fought, then cried. As a general thing tears after anger are considered a weakening; a half-way consenting to the proposed and despised plan. But not so

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with Carla. She cried because she felt relief that came with the reaction of the nervous system—not the reaction of her determined mind. The young minister had pictured to her the great good she would derive from trained fingers and consciousness; but she sat with stone features; he had painted in vivid colors the good times at the school, but she saw in her imagination only a strange, strange world that would not respond to her touch; he had told of her joy at coming back to the village to spend her vacation, and she saw but the dreary stretch of nine unending months. Incidentally he spoke of music lessons and the girl was vivified as by an electric shock.

“Fiddle?” she gasped eagerly.

“Yes.”

“My own?”

“They will furnish you one at the school until we see whether you can learn to play, and if you will go and go nicely, Carla, and learn to play a violin, I will buy you one myself.”

For answer she flung herself bodily

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upon him, almost strangling him in her embrace, as she cried through her tears—tears of joy now.

“Oh! will ye? Will ye? Will ye?”

The paroxysm of joy passed, suspicion took its place.

“Oh, I guess ye’re jest a foolin’ me to get me to go.”

“Carolyn,” came in reproachful tones as he quietly took her long, thin hand, “I have never lied since I decided to follow the lowly Christ. I meant every word I said. If you earn it you shall have the violin if I go without a set of books.”

From that time on Carla had been in a fever of impatience to go. The young minister kept adding fuel to the flame, for the illiterate parents seemed indifferent as to whether she entered at the beginning of the school year, at Christmas, or three days before Commencement.

Finally the scant preparations had been accomplished, and the day for her departure from her squalid home had arrived.

Her parents had decided to take her all the way—more from a standpoint of curi-

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osity than to see that the child was properly entered and lodged.

The young minister had accompanied them as far as Crowel, the nearest railroad station. He had sat with Carla and Spat on the back seat of the old, rickety, spring wagon, from which the springs had long since been removed.

Carla's limp sunbonnet hung over her shoulders, and her face, topped by her tawny hair, cropped boy-fashion, had been turned the whole way toward the young minister as she plied him with eager questions.

They had reached the station at one o'clock. The pastor attended to the tickets, being careful to buy the returns for the parents, foreseeing that, in their ignorance, they might be put to discomfort in a strange place.

Spat frolicked about them as Carla threw sticks, rocks, her bright, bordered handkerchief—anything—for him to bring back. Spat was no beauty. That the absence of one ear and most of his tail was accountable for this was evidenced by his

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glossy coat. It was Carla's greatest care to keep his hair as soft as the silkiest that ever adorned a more perfect form. As the train whistle sounded in the distance, she threw her arms around his body and held him tightly to her while the tears streamed from her sightless eyes.

"Oh! can't I take him along?" she cried, turning to the young pastor who stood near her, surreptitiously wiping his eyes with a fine linen handkerchief.

"No, Carla," he said gently. "It wouldn't do at all."

"I don't see why," protested Carla.

After he had seated them and called the last good-bye to Carla from the platform, and the big train had pulled out, she sat with her head in her hand, a forlorn picture.

After awhile she inadvertently touched the plush seat with her hand, letting it wander over the surface for a moment. Suddenly she jerked it back, asking in frightened tones: "What is it?"

"T'aint nothin' but the seat kiver," her mother answered.

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"Oh! I thought at first it was Spat, it was so soft; but when it got so big I thought maybe it might be a lion and would bite."

"Hush," commanded her mother, "don't act like you never seen nothin'."

"Well I ain't, hev I?" asked Carla defiantly.

"Here, little 'un, don't you want a drink?" interrupted the father.

"Yes, Dad." Her voice suddenly softened as she patted the hand that held the cup; her defiant mood as quickly vanquished as it had been brought forth.

For some time her attention had been held by the unusual sounds, the shriek of the whistle, the puff of the engine and the voice of the porter. She had drawn her breath in great gasps of enjoyment as the sharp current struck her face as they whizzed along; but finally she realized that her back was tired, and her legs ached from the unaccustomed position.

All this had been gone through with as in a dream.

The young minister had neglected to

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notify the superintendent of the time of their arrival, and no one met them with the "Blind" carriage and staid old Bill, to help them across the bridge and up the long hill to the school on the bluffs above. So now the three were trudging up the hill, and along the driveway to the main entrance of the school.

They had stood on the wide porch at least ten minutes, not knowing that a pressure of the little white button to the right of the door would gain them admittance.

There is no telling how long they might have stood there had not a little blind girl a few years older than Carla, suddenly run against them as she made for the door.

"Who are you?" she asked, feeling their clothing was strange to her touch.

Explanations followed, ending with Carla's blunt assertion that she was "tired 'most to death, and for Lord's sake let her set down."

"I will show you the way to the reception room," said the little girl, kindly taking Carla's hand; "but," she whispered

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softly, "you mustn't say 'Lord's sake'!"

"All right," agreed Carla, wearily. "If ye let me set down I won't; but if ye don't, I'll say it over and over jest as fast as ever I can make my tongue wag."

Impelled by this dire threat, the little girl hastily seated them; first Carla, then the uncomfortable parents.

"I'll get the Girls' Supervisor," she assured them, and vanished through the door.

Before the Supervisor had time to appear, she ran back into the room and, guided by Carla's voice, went directly to her side.

"Won't you tell me your name?" she asked gently.

"Carla," came promptly as the two blind children sought and clasped hands.

"I like that, and I like you," went on the sweet voice.

"What's your'n?" blurted Carla, more touched by the little girl's soft voice than she would admit—even to herself.

"Mine's Helen, Helen Elwood."

The entrance of the Girls' Supervisor

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interrupted further confidences, and, with a parting squeeze of Carla's hand, Helen ran away while the grotesque trio was escorted to Dr. Hunt's study.

CHAPTER TWO

ONE FALL morning in Carla's second year at the school, she ran into the little girls' dormitory crying, "Settle down, kids, if you want Helen to tell a story." She threw her ten-year-old, lank frame on the dormitory floor beside Helen's little rocking chair, where the latter sat patiently waiting for the children to "settle."

"I'm going to *read* a story, instead of just telling one, girls," explained silver-voiced Helen, as she opened a blank account book, "I'll read it just like people who see with their *eyes*."

"Tellin' stories is tame. Go on, Helen," cried impatient Carla.

"Oh, Helen, wait for me, pleathe," begged Kate, running in and squatting down beside Beth on the floor, as close as

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possible to the small story teller.

"Now, girls," explained Helen, "I will start here at the top of this very first page and read down to the bottom." As she spoke, she drew her little finger down the page as if the children could really see her.

"Yes, yes, but hurry, Helen, or the dinner bell will ring before you get through," urged Carla.

"You must not rush me, Carla, or I cannot give you the best that's in me," Helen spoke with the dignity of her fourteen years and the knowledge that she was repeating a "grown-up" remark, that would really impress the children as her very own. "Now if you are settled to *stay* settled, I will begin." Silence prevailed, and she commenced:

"Once-upon-a-time there was a little girl named Arabella, and she went out in the woods to play—"

"Fishin'?" put in boyish Carla.

"Ye-es," consented Helen, "but if you are going to keep saying things, *I'll* stop." This dire threat brought a hasty promise from Carla "to be good," and once more

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Helen proceeded with her story.

"—And she was going along singing to herself because she was as happy as a bird, and she sang jest like one, and she come to a crystal stream."

"What's a crysal stream?" questioned Kate of the auburn locks and round, freckled face.

"A crystal stream," patiently explained the small story-teller, "is a—a—a—well—I guess it means full of fish. Anyway she caught a lot—more'n a thousand. And she piled 'em near a big log, and she sat down on the log to rest, and pretty soon a big, black bear—"

"Pleathe, Helen, don' make it so dre'-ful," pleaded little, timid Beth, hugging the arm of Helen's chair more closely.

"Yes, yes, Helen, go on! It's bully!" Carla, who was lying flat on her stomach, kicked up her heels in ecstasy.

"It's luvly," echoed Kate in a little, flattering voice that was as truly of the Emerald Isle as were her sightless blue eyes.

"I'll not read another word if Carla says 'bully' once more," said Helen severe-

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ly, pressing her little lips to a firm, straight line.

"Well, go on an' I won't," readily promised Carla.

Helen relaxed her straight, stiff shoulders and lips, and resumed her narrative:

"As I was reading from this *seeing* book, 'pretty soon a big, black bear came along and sat down by dear little Arabella on the log—' "

"U-ugh!" shuddered Carla, enjoyably.

"Oh! dear!" sighed Kate, twining her arm comfortingly around little Beth, who sat with pale-gold head bowed on the arm of Helen's chair, too overcome to give voice to her feelings.

"I know it's dreadful—" commenced Helen, when Carla, thinking she was about to soften the tale, burst out with "Bul—"

Helen closed the book with the full intention of punishing Carla by discontinuing the story; but Carla caught herself in the nick of time, and ended with a long-drawn out "Be-u-te-ful," whereupon the little blank book was opened, and the tale continued:

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“—on the log by little Arabella. Arabella jumped up and hollered ‘Oh!’ but the bear smiled and said he wouldn’t hurt her. He just wanted a fish, and would she be so kind as to hand him one. So dear, little Arabella picked up a fish; but she was a-scared to hand it to him, so she jest threw it, and it fell in the dirt. The bear could-a ketched it; but just played like he couldn’t. Then he said it wasn’t perlite for little, small girls to throw things, and she sasssed him back, and said it wasn’t nice for great, big, strong bears to ask little girls to wait on ’em, and that made Mr. Bear mad, and he jumped over the log and the fish, and grabbed little Arabella and chewed her dead, and her bones cracked—and cracked—and cracked—.”

“Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!” sobbed six-year-old Kate and Beth in unison.

“Don’t cry. That ain’t the end. It wasn’t Arabella the bear et,” comforted Helen, changing her story to suit her audience. “It was a wooden doll she poked in his mouth when he grabbed for her,” she ended triumphantly, closing the small

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book.

"Fudge! You spoilt it!" cried Carla in high disgust.

"Well, it's pretty hard to suit you all," said Helen, with conviction. "I just guess the very best way is to suit myself, and I will the next time—so there!"

Fortunately, at this moment the big bell on the lower south porch clanged out its hearty invitation to the dining room.

Carla unwound the long lengths of her arms and legs, and finally gaining a firm position on the latter, used them to advantage as she tore from the room, coming in sudden contact with the door before she succeeded in gaining the hall. Helen, with sweet, quiet dignity, smoothed her long, dark braids, and putting the small blank book under the mattress of her little dormitory bed for "safe keeping," walked through the doorway without so much as touching it with her small skirts. She soon caught up with Kate and Beth. It being their first year at the school, they were feeling their unfamiliar way, through the long hall and down the stairs. Thus, in

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their several characteristic ways, they finally joined the long line forming outside the big dining room door in the lower hall.

CHAPTER THREE

THE following morning being Sunday, the little blind girls were dressed with unusual care, just as other little girls are dressed on Sunday mornings.

They had arrived at this state of immaculateness by their several characteristic routes. Carla had jerked and pulled to her heart's delight, and the Girls' Supervisor's disgust. After putting her collar on up-side-down, missing half the eyelets in her shoes, and using her Sunday dress skirt for a petticoat while her red flannel did duty on the outside, she decided to submit to being put to rights by the kindly Supervisor.

Kate and Beth behaved beautifully—except when Beth's tangles were combed in order to restore her pale gold hair to

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its properly curled state; and when Kate insisted that she could pick her blue ribbon from her half-dozen kinds, by feeling of its width—like the big girls did.

"It's jes as easy," she assured Miss Wood.

"You would better let me get it, dear," Miss Wood answered.

"May Dobbins says it's *easy*," Kate insisted, "an' she can't see any better with her fingers than me—if she is big an' growed up."

Miss Wood, being wise in her generation, let the teacher "Experience" impart a lesson to the over-confident little blind girl. When Kate had fumbled over her ribbons for some time the supervisor quietly bade her select the pale blue one.

"Don't you look, Miss Wood, 'till I tie it on my own self—will you?"

Miss Wood promised and after a prolonged effort at arranging the bow, Kate proudly invited the Supervisor's inspection.

Miss Wood looked—and burst into a merry peal of laughter. Kate had tied

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her doll's bright green sash to her equally bright red locks.

Helen, as usual, had come through the ordeal unscathed, her dark brown hair hanging in two satin braids tied with warm red ribbons of her own "picking"; for Helen had, at an early age, learned to know the colors of her ribbons by the widths. It is a proud moment in a little blind girl's life, when she is able to select her own ribbons—just like *seeing* girls.

Their Sunday elegance was broken in upon by the voice of the new teacher:

"Wouldn't you little girls like to come to my room and help me drink chocolate?"

"Would we like to? We'd just love to. Bul—" commenced Carla; but stopped suddenly for fear the new teacher might punish her, as Helen often did, by depriving her of the pleasure.

"Oh! Oh!" came in round-mouthed chorus from Kate and Beth.

Helen smiled sweetly; "We'd certainly enjoy it, Miss Hicken."

"Get some of the other children and come at once for we have just an hour

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before chapel," the new teacher called back over her shoulder. "Dorothy and Donald will be there, too," she added brightly. Dorothy and Donald were the Superintendent's children, and dearly loved by the little blind girls and boys.

A half hour found Miss Hicken hovering over the chafing dish, beneath which the alcohol flame flickered invitingly.

"Gee! but it smells good!" sniffed Carla, who sat with one knee thrown, boy-like, over the footboard of the bed, while the other foot swung restlessly back and forth.

"Miss Hicken always makes good things," vouched Helen, whose opinion was never contradicted by the other children.

"Will she div us the 'ittle tups, I wonder," lisped Beth in Kate's nearest ear.

"Hope tho," Kate whispered back, while Miss Hicken rattled the tiny after-dinner spoons and little chocolate cups in their small saucers. With Dorothy's help, she filled and distributed them among the children. They drank their chocolate, and ate their little cakes, seated comfortably

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on the chairs, bed, and floor. The warm drink producing the same effect on the small men and women that it does on their elders, their tongues were soon loosened.

"Miss Hicken, can you see around a corner?" questioned Helen, quite seriously.

"See around a corner?" repeated Miss Hicken, while Dorothy's eyes sparkled, Donald laughed outright, and the blind children sat with ears and mouths open awaiting Miss Hicken's answer to their leader's question.

"Yes, around the corner of a house?" repeated Helen, followed by another laugh from Donald.

"You must not laugh, Donald," chided Miss Hicken. She drew Helen comfortingly within the circle of her arm before adding, "Now, tell me just what you mean, Helen dear?"

"You can hear around a corner," soberly answered the small inquirer after truth, "and of course you can see around a corner, with your fingers—because I did once—so I wondered if you could see around it

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with your seeing eyes."

"It is perfectly natural that you should wonder that, Helen, but no one can see around a corner, because the eyes cannot see through an opaque substance, nor around a solid wall. That is one of the things you will understand as you grow older."

"Then *we* kin see some things with our *fingers* that *you* can't with your *eyes*," proudly boasted Carla.

"There's so many things I want to know, and it's such a very long time till I grow up," moaned Helen plaintively. "Things bother me a lot that I don't understand."

"Helen!" cried Dorothy, her bright eyes dancing as she hopped from one foot to the other, "tell Miss Hicken what it sounds like when Irene Wiley plays the grand piano with the soft pedal on."

"Helen, afraid of raising another laugh at her own expense, remained silent.

Carla, as usual, came to the rescue.

"Helen said it sounded like it was playing through its nose," she shouted, swing-

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ing her long arms and legs, in her eagerness to vindicate her friend. To her own astonishment, and the children's delight, she swung once too often, and, turning a somersault, she landed among the younger children, seated on the floor. Luckily Miss Hicken's frail cups and saucers escaped whole, and she proceeded to rescue Carla, and refill the cups. Carla, taking advantage of the situation, threw her strong, muscular arms around Miss Hicken and gave her a genuine bear hug. Miss Hicken emerged red of face and short of breath.

"Carla! Carla!" she gasped, "if you are not more gentle, I must forbid you to love me."

Carla, who could be reached only through her affections, quieted instantly.

"I just can't help it, Miss Hicken," she said contritely. "Every time you come near you make me think of my little dog at home, and I love him better than anybody."

Miss Hicken smiled at the rather doubtful compliment.

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"She always makes me think of going driving in the springtime," said Helen, "when the sun's shining, and the wind is soft, and you can almost see the new spring flowers, they smell so sweet; and her voice," she continued, talking more to herself than to the children, "sounds like she was eating off a golden plate."

"I hope it is not as metallic as that," laughed Miss Hicken, patting Helen's shoulders.

"I don't know what metallic means," said Helen slowly; "but it's something nice, if it means what I did."

"Thank you, Helen, I am sure it does," answered the new teacher.

"I know what metallic means," piped Donald in his clear child's treble. "It means made of metal, and it's hard, so metallic means hard."

"Donald is right," said Miss Hicken, "and," she hastened on for Helen's comfort, "there are many precious metals, and gold is the most precious of all. That is what Helen meant."

"Yes, I did," said Helen, not grasping

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their meaning, but recognizing the word "precious" as one they used in their Sunday School songs.

Miss Hicken, sensing the situation, silently clasped Helen's hand as she turned the conversation into other channels.

In a short time the bell for chapel sounded and the children, jumping to their feet, bade Miss Hicken good-bye, and left the room with their arms intertwining, the smaller ones vieing for the honor of walking with the Superintendent's children and with Helen.

All but Beth. She lingered, evidently with something on her mind. As the other children vanished she sidled up to Miss Hicken and slipped her little hand in that of the teacher.

"New Teacher," she said earnestly, somebody said somethin' nawful 'bout you."

"What was it, Beth?" she asked, curious for the child's reply.

"I wouldn't tell you for anyfing. It would make you feel *dreful*."

"I'll promise I won't be hurt, dear.

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Hurry. We must go to Chapel."

"Well, it was that big brother of mine when he comed to see me. He called you 'Miss Chicken'."

"Oh!" laughed Miss Hicken, "he just did that to make you laugh, pet."

"Well, I *didn't* laugh," said the small blind girl, indignation and loyalty vieing in her voice.

"Bless the baby!" cried Miss Hicken, snatching the frail little form to her arms and covering the pale, earnest face with kisses. "You're a loyal little lady."

Beth could not grasp the meaning of such a big word as loyal; but her heart was warmed and comforted by Miss Hicken's approval.

"Now we must go to Chapel," cried the teacher as the last warning tap of the bell sounded, and, grasping Beth's hand in hers, they sped down the long hall and up the stairs to the morning exercises.

CHAPTER FOUR

CARLA, as is sometimes the case with the blind, was born with an exaggerated sense of rhythm, to which her body swayed almost incessantly. This was especially marked if she heard music, or if she were playing or singing. She reminded one of the famous negro pianist, "Blind Boone."

Helen had undertaken to cure Carla of this swaying habit and, although she had not made great progress, she was accomplishing a little. Now she had but to lay her hand on Carla to stop the motion for the time being.

One day Miss Hicken asked Helen how she could tell when Carla was swaying. "It makes the air seem different," she had answered, "and then, if she is talking, it makes wobbles in her voice."

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Helen and Carlo were close friends and, as the days went by, they became almost inseparable. One almost experienced revulsion at sight of tall, angular, harum-scarum Carla, with her long, sinewy arms twined around the waist of ladylike, madonna-faced Helen, who, in contrast, looked like a dainty Dresden piece.

There was a link that held them fast, for in the heart of Helen was one day born a sister resolve to one she had made a short time before. The first was the outcome of the natural processes of a child's active and imaginative mind, and was some time in maturing. She had decided to be a writer, not because she especially wished to; but as a natural outlet to her emotions. The second resolve burst upon her with meteor-like suddenness, one bright Autumn day as she and Carla sat beneath the old apple tree, which grew in front of the Broom Shop, where the big blind boys learned to make brooms and mattresses.

No wonder the old apple tree was all drawn into knots, with trying hard to keep

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the secrets it had heard for years. It had heard all of Helen's and Carla's from the beginning of their friendship, but never such a brilliant, startling one as this great resolve. This is how it happened:

The two little blind girls had brought their "point" books out to study under the old tree; but fell to talking of the musical examinations of the past few days.

"I'm glad it is over," sighed Helen with relief.

"Oh! I aint," cried Carla, "I feel the best ever at music exams. I feel like I can make 'em laugh or cry jes' as easy as anything."

"And you do, Carla," answered Helen, for the once overlooking Carla's slang, as she re-lived the sensations she had enjoyed as Carla's bow had brought forth laughter and tears from the hard, taut strings of her violin.

"It scares me to say a piece," went on Carla, "but to play! Oh! Helen, I wish I *could* tell jest how it does make me feel! Jest to stand in the practice room, with the sunshine pourin' on my head and

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fiddle, an' play an' play! Why! It's somethin' like Heaven must be." She lowered her voice to a whisper as she added, "An' the sunlight always makes me think of what you said about the light of God shinin' in our lives and, Helen," her voice falling even lower, "the sunshine makes my fiddle seem alive, and I play, an' play—. Some day, some day, Helen, when the sunshine of God gets into us far enough, we'll see, Helen, we'll see! I wish I could tell you how it feels when I play in the sunshine!"

"I know, dear," said Helen, "I feel it, too, when you play; but I just can't do it myself. I think I'm going to make a good piano grade, and then I get to thinking of everybody listening to me, and I do just as bad as I did the month before; but I know what you mean, Carla. I feel it sometimes in the middle of the night, and I get up and get my stylus and tablet, and write, and write."

"You'll write a book some day," said Carla confidently.

"I suppose so," said Helen, not sur-

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prised that Carla should have made the assertion. "I just won't be able to help it. Some day I'll just feel, and feel, and feel, so much *here*," she said, placing her hand over her heart, "I'll burst if I don't do something big—and I guess it'll be a book. I hope it will be *good*," she added wistfully.

"Of course it will," comforted Carla.

"I don't know," said Helen, "I don't always *feel* good things."

"You'll forget *me*," blurted Carla, jealously. And then the resolve was born in Helen's mind. She sat up quickly.

"Carla! Listen! You're going to be a great *Public Player*. You've got to, Carla."

"All right," came back cheerfully from Carla.

"But it won't be easy, Carla. You will have to stop slang and swaying—not just a little while, but all the time."

"I jest can't help swaying when I'm playing, Helen. When I play, I see the most beautiful pictures. I guess they're pictures. Things that look like roses

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smell, laid against a bank of snow. I know it's snow 'cause it seems cool. Then I forget the swaying—an' everything—even *you*. But that won't hurt," she went on cheerfully, "'s long 's I kin make 'em laugh and cry—*an' I kin!*"

"But listen, Carla. It's not as easy to make grown folks laugh and cry as it is us children. And it's harder to make *seeing* people."

"How do you know?" questioned Carla.

"I heard Miss Schmalley say so."

"Well," said Carla, dejectedly, "it must be so then. She knows everything 'bout music. Say, Helen, she told me last lesson I'm 'provin'!"

"Improving, Carla."

"Yes, that's what I mean."

"But say it," commanded Helen.

"Improvin'," came dutifully from Carla.

"Oh, Carla, do put your 'g' on. Say, 'ing,' improving."

After repeated efforts, Carla succeeded in pronouncing the word to the satisfaction of the small critic.

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“If you’re going to be *great*—and you *are*,” said Helen, “we’ll both have to be more careful. You’ll have to be more careful of your own self, and I’ll have to be more careful of your *own self*, too.”

CHAPTER FIVE

CARLA was restless. Several things led to it, among which was a sore finger, which prevented her doing her usual practicing. She missed her violin. True she "sat out" her usual practice time, with her beloved instrument in her arms, and her face upturned to the sunshine that always streamed through that particular window; but she couldn't play. That explained everything. She missed the musical rhythm that was wont to flow through her mind to the quivering violin, the instrument that had become as Heaven's mouth-piece to her innate self. Carla would not have expressed it so; but she felt as did the little boy who said when he came home from school and found mother away, that "It seemed like all the window blinds were

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down." She was always discontented when deprived of this favorite outlet to her surplus vitality, and as so often the case with such natures is to reach a climax in some great good, or bad, act, Carla was not exempt. There was nothing premeditated about her good actions, and less about the bad ones.

Afterward, when Helen moaned over her disgrace, and tearfully asked—

"Oh! Carla, whatever did make you do it?"

She answered quite seriously—

"Me an' the Devil."

"But you didn't have to," argued Helen, "you could have said, 'Get thee behind me, Devil'."

"He was already behind a-pushin' me out the window, so it wouldn't a-done any good to say that if I'd a thought of it. You don't know anything about it, Helen. *You* never had feelin's like mine. I *did* try to feel right. Of course I didn't know I was a-goin' to do anything bad; but something inside me commenced to boil an' boil, an' get bigger an' bigger every

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single day 'till one day I did it. If I hadn't, I would have busted—or boiled over—an' I wish I had-a; then you wouldn't be so hurt."

"Oh! Carla, you know I would, too," sobbed Helen.

The two girls were seated on the floor with their backs against their dormitory bed, and Carla—rough, boyish Carla—leaned over, took Helen's little body in her arms, and tenderly crooned over her until she was perfectly quiet, then proceeded:

"What I mean is this, Helen, if I had-a busted, I would-a died an' you'd-a got over it—people always do, an' make angels even out-a *bad* people; but now you never will, an' will always think I am a *thief*."

"Tell me all about it, Carla. I know you never meant to *steal*."

As she spoke, Helen slipped from Carla's lap; but kept her arm tenderly around her.

"I never once thought 'bout stealin'," answered Carla. "You know I set by that low window in sewin' class, and that day the window was open. I don't see why

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God didn't have that window shut that day," she went on rebelliously, "then I wouldn't-a done it."

"Maybe He had it open on purpose," put in Helen.

"If He did it wasn't no nice way for God to do," said Carla indignantly. "Well, anyways it was open, an' a little bird hopped onto the window an' chirped, an' when I put my hand out to pet him he flew away. All in a second, I wisht I was a bird an' could fly away, an' before I knowed it, I was out'n that window an' runnin' like fire through the long grass."

"If you just hadn't gone on the boys' side," moaned Helen, "it would have been one less rule broken."

"I tell you I didn't know where I was a-goin' 'till I stumbled over Jim a-layin' in the grass. After I got up, he wanted to know what I was a-doin', an' I said 'runnin',' an' he said he'd back me to run a race an' away we went. It was bul—oh! Helen, I didn't say it!" Carla stopped and slapped herself on the mouth three times before taking up the thread of her

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story. "We landed 'gainst the fence—or I did—you know Jim can see some, an' he dared me to climb it, an' it jest kept on that way 'till we come to Brown's orchard. I didn't know whose it was then. We was awful hungry an' we set down an' et all the apples we could hold. Then Jim run off an' left me an' I tried to come back the way we went, an' I thought I was for a long time, when I come plank against that apple tree. I walked 'till I couldn't feel nothin' in my legs but ache, an' every time I'd land at that same old tree."

"My! How romantic!" cried Helen, forgetting the position she had taken as Carla's guardian; forgetting Carla's slang; forgetting all else but the delicious thrills running up and down her spine at the tale of Carla's adventures. "I've heard that's the way story people do when they get lost. I wish it had been me."

"So do I," blurted Carla, then, catching herself, she added hastily, "No, I don't either, it wasn't no fun *then*. It would have killed you, Helen. I must-a walked most all night, 'cause it wasn't no time

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after they brought me back 'till the risin' bell rung, and now I can never be great, nor nothin'." She said the last with something like a sigh of relief, for Helen had proved a very strict taskmaster of late. "I guess I might jest as well give it all up an' stay clost to you so's I can keep good. I'm afraid, Helen, I'm scared I'll do somethin' awful some day when I get to boilin' that way. I'm a regular cowardy calf."

"No, you won't, Carla," said Helen in a positive little voice. "I can't make you good," she added. "It'd take somebody lots bigger than me. You and God must do that, Carla," then, with a proud lifting of her delicate little chin, she went on, "I wouldn't *want* to be good *that* way. Just by having somebody near me. It's a whole lot braver to be good *alone*. Sometimes I wish I could have just one great big temptation so's I could knock it down."

"What if it'd knock you down. It might," said Carlo, "but then it wouldn't," she added quickly. "You're not the same's me."

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"It don't seem fair," half-whispered Helen.

"It ain't," came tersely from Carla. "I couldn't help what I did no more'n nothin'. No more'n that bird that hopped on the window could help flying when I tried to ketch him; but I guess I got to be punished jest the same as if I'd planned it."

Just then they heard the clerk's voice in the hall asking for Carla, and someone directing him to the dormitory.

"Yes, I'm here," called Carla in response to the inquiry that followed the rap on the door.

Helen involuntarily tightened the arm that hung carelessly across Carla's shoulders.

"Dr. Hunt wishes to see you in the office, at once," said the clerk.

"I knew it would come," said Carla, stoically.

Both girls arose, passed, arm in arm, from the room, and down the long hall and stairway. Dr. Hunt's office was located at the extreme south end of the lower hall, so, as the girls' dormitories were in the

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north wing, they had another long hall to cover before reaching the office. No word was spoken until they reached the door. Carla gave Helen's hand a vice-like squeeze.

"Good-bye, Helen," she said tensely.

"I'm coming all the way," said Helen.

"No, no, you mustn't. It was all my fault an' I must go in alone."

She gently pushed Helen aside as she spoke, rapped hastily, as hastily opened the door, and closed it between herself and her dearest friend.

Helen, denied entrance at this point and prompted only by the thought that she must stand by Carla in her great trouble; Helen, who had never disobeyed a rule in her life, deliberately broke the strictest of all, and slipping through the boys' hall quietly entered the office from that side.

Carla was answering questions put to her by Dr. Hunt. Guided by her voice, Helen stepped quickly and softly to her side and put her arm protectingly around Carla's angular form.

Dr. Hunt's frown at Helen's abrupt

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entrance changed to a very tender smile as he saw at a glance the deep-rooted affection of the two little blind girls. He trembled to crush so beautiful a thing.

"You say you did jump out of the window, Carolyn?" he went on.

"Yes, sir," she replied, stoutly.

"And you went onto the boys' playground?" he continued.

"Yes, sir."

"You ran away with Jim Baker?"

"No—yes," hesitated poor Carla, "I guess *you* would call it that."

"Please, Dr. Hunt," interrupted Helen, able no longer to contain herself, "she didn't know she was on the boys' side, and she didn't plan one bit of it."

"That will do, Helen," said the Doctor gently, but firmly. "How was it, Carolyn, did you go with Jim?"

"Yes, sir, but not 'till after I fell over him in the grass. He dared me to run a race."

"Had you no thought for rules, or of honor?"

"No, sir, she didn't," eagerly put in

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Helen. "The apples were so good and something was boiling inside of her and kept getting bigger and bigger and she said she would have busted if she hadn't run. She ought to have said 'bursteds,' but you know what she meant. I do. Sometimes I feel that way, only not as bad as her, and I write, and write."

Dr. Hunt's eyes sparkled and the corners of his mouth twitched convulsively.

"What made you feel like that, Carla?" he asked, using the children's nickname for her.

"The Devil," blurted the child.

The Doctor gave a start, then, seeing the seriousness of the little blind girl, his smile broadened; but he answered severely:

"No doubt it was, Carolyn, but it is not nice for little girls who expect to grow into ladies someday, to use such language. As Helen says, I know what the feeling is and I know, also, that it is a force that can be turned to great good—instead of bad. It all depends upon yourself. I had intended giving you a longer punishment

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than I will now that I know it was not planned badness. Carolyn, you may choose one of two punishments. You may give up your music entirely—chorus class and all—for two weeks; or, you and Helen may occupy separate dormitories and have nothing to do with each other for that length of time.”

Carla started to say something, but Helen, as if she knew by instinct and her knowledge of Carla’s impulsive nature, just what she would do, gently put her hand over her mouth.

“Helen,” went on Dr. Hunt, “has also broken a rule by entering my office from the boys’ side.”

“Oh, Dr. Hunt,” commenced Carla.

“I know why she did it, Carla,” said the Doctor kindly, “and I cannot blame anyone for trying to help a friend; but a rule is a rule, made for the good of the greater number, and must be obeyed by all.”

“Can’t you make my time longer, or do something else to me instead of Helen? I guess a little more won’t hurt me much worse.”

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"No, Carla. You are none too young to learn that a bad action always hurts those we love best."

Carla tried to be brave; but she stealthily wiped the tears from her sightless eyes.

At the mention of her disobedience Helen's sensitive face had flushed painfully; but now a white calm settled upon it.

"I will take my own punishment, if you please," she said quietly. "I knew I'd have to all the time."

"That is the only right way, girls," said the Doctor. "Carla will see it, too, after awhile, and if she decides to keep on with her music and take the other punishment, it will serve for Helen also. Should she give up her music I will give Helen another punishment. This is Saturday. Monday morning you may let me know, Carla; and remember, girls, a wrong act always brings its punishment—even if you are never found out. That will do now. Report Monday morning."

CHAPTER SIX

SUNDAY seemed endless to Helen and Carla. They left the dining room after breakfast with arms closely entwined and the unspoken feeling that they could never bear to be separated—that giving up anything else would be small compared to it. Greatness and public concert playing faded in the distance.

Half an hour later, walking up and down the long lower porch that ran the full length of the “girls’ side,” they decided to see what it would be like to separate until dinner time, and pretend that they could not speak to each other, much less give a loving pat in passing, or walk as now, each with an arm around the other’s waist. They kissed each other as though one, or the other, were going on

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a long journey, and parted for the "test."

Helen brought her tablet and stylus to the porch and wrote a long letter home to help fill in the time before Sunday School, which was held in the chapel from eleven o'clock until the first dinner bell rang. She had the advantage of her early home training to support her. Although from time to time she paused in her writing, sat with a pensive look on her face, sighed, and resumed her letter, she did not find the test as difficult as did Carla.

In her dormitory Carla was seeking comfort as best she could from a photograph of her father with Spat in his arms. It was only a small kodak picture the young clergyman had taken for her when he learned that the blind like photographs of their friends "just like seeing people." He could not understand it; but was glad of the opportunity it gave him to add one more ray of sunshine to it for her comfort. It was Sunday, so she could not have recourse to her violin to ease the ache in her heart. She felt the picture-side by the smooth surface, and held it tightly against her breast with both hands.

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"I love you, Spat, dog," she said tenderly, "and you, too, Dad, better'n anybody but Helen. Ye both alwuz did the best ye could by me," unconsciously dropping back to the language of her early environment. "Ye fetched and carried sticks and things till ye most giv out, an' ye tended me when I wuz sick better'n my mother did," she went on, in her loneliness getting her sentences, her father and dog greatly mixed.

Finally she gently wrapped the picture in its white tissue paper, and laid it away in her locker drawer. The other blind girls decorated each her little spot in the dormitory with pictures of their friends; but Carla's was too precious. She had but the *one*.

Even the beloved Sunday School proved tiresome. The chicken dinner, with ice cream for dessert—in itself usually a panacea for week-day troubles—failed to soothe the restless hearts of the two little blind girls.

The afternoon found them in their favorite spot under the old apple tree, from

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which the fall wind was gently dropping numberless leaves on the ground. The little girls sat silent, with arms closely locked. Both were very quiet—except that Carla's heel was rebelliously digging into the sod.

"It's hard both ways," she said at last. "If I give up the music we kin stay together, but I won't have my music; and if I don't give it up, I'll have *it*; but we can't have nothin' to do with each other for two whole weeks."

"It's dreadful bad," Helen admitted with clouded brow; "but it might be worse," she added optimistically.

"No, it couldn't" cried Carla, impulsively throwing her arms around Helen, "an' I love you better'n music, or anything, an' I'm agoin' to give up the music an' stay clost to you, Helen."

Helen started to answer as impulsively as Carla had spoken; but stopped, and clinching her little lip between her sharp teeth, held it tight until she had herself well in hand. Then, in her quaint way, she quietly answered, "My mamma says

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'loving isn't just feelings. Sometimes it's doing hard things for your beloved'."

"Now, Helen," interrupted Carla, "you're agoin' to ask me to not give up my music, but you needn't. Love *is* feelings. That's how I know I love *you*."

"I know you don't love me better'n you do to do right," said Helen with more conviction than she felt.

"Yes, I do," protested Carla. "*I* know I do, and *you* know I do, so what's the use in a-sayin' I don't. I don't want to be great. It's a whole lot too much trouble. I'd rather just play my violin as I want to, and hear people say, 'Jest listen to that little blind girl play,' than to study my head off, an' play for people who will say, 'Yes, she has talent; but did you notice that false note?'"

Helen saw that her aircastle for the future of herself and Carla was tottering. She felt, in a very matter-of-fact way that one day she would be famous; but she was not content to reach this pinnacle unless her little friend should share the glory with her. If Carla gave up being a great

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player, she felt she could not stop with her on *her* level and this something within her would compel her to become "great" in spite of herself; consequently, they would be vastly more separated than by the two weeks punishment. Helen did not say all this to herself, nor to Carla; but she felt it with a shadowy foreboding. She was older than children of her own age by several years, and from a little child had shown great reasoning power. She turned to Carla and asked gently:

"Do you really love me, Carla?"

"Are you deaf, Helen? Aint I been tellin' you how much I love you?"

"Hard enough to do a favor for your beloved?" continued Helen, ignoring the sharp retort, and drawing Carla's rough head to her shoulder.

"Course," came from the head on the shoulder, as a long-fingered hand stole up to pat Helen's cheek.

"Then, if you do, Carla, you will go on and be great."

"I'm tired of tryin' to be something big," complained Carla. "It aint natural

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to me. *You* jest can't help it, so it's easy for *you* to talk."

"I know it's some different," admitted Helen. "I feel I can't help doing something big sometime; but I won't like it one bit when Lords and Ladies gather round me and say and do nice things unless you're just as great as me, and they say and do them to you, too. So, if you don't try to be great you'll spoil my time, don't you see? And we'll seem so far away from each other," she finished wistfully.

"Well, I guess if I must, I can," declared Carla resignedly.

"Don't you want to?" questioned Helen in a voice hinting of tears.

"Course," cried her rough little friend, giving her a bear hug. "Now, Huppee! Let's have a race down the driveway before dinner."

Jumping frog-fashion to her feet, she grasped Helen's hand, and away went the two little blind girls, with pigtailed trying to keep up with their flying feet.

The next morning Carla gave Dr. Hunt

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her decision, and she and Helen began the two weeks of separation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT was afternoon in Miss Brice's school-room. The day's work had commenced with Arithmetic, which is taught the blind children in much the same way as it is those with sight. The exception being that the work is all oral, and that, instead of the little wooden frame with it's metal bars on which are strung wooden beads, being hung on the wall, and the teacher moving the beads, each blind child holds a frame and moves the beads as the teacher asks: "Two beads added to two beads makes how many beads?" etc.

The reading was gone through, with the children at their desks, their sensitive finger tips moving over the raised points in the large New York Point books opened before them.

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The spelling class had recited; the oral work followed by the click, click of their stuli as they wrote the new lesson at Miss Brices' dictation.

"The geography class will take their places around the globe," she announced as she closed the speller.

The children gathered around the great globe of the world with the countries raised, and small brass-headed tacks marking the principal cities. The rivers were indented and the mountains raised, as in a topographical map. Each country and island could be lifted out and its shape felt by the blind child.

As the class took its place there was a knock at the door and a young blind girl, whose duty it was to show the visitors through the building, ushered in two gentlemen.

Miss Brice welcomed them, and offered chairs; but they preferred to stand near the globe with the children.

"We will have a review of the United States first," said Miss Brice, and the class moved to an upright flat map, made simi-

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lar to the globe.

"Charlie Bates, pick out the two states most similar in outline."

Charles stepped forward and deftly took up Colorado and Wyoming. He was about to replace them when one of the visitors, young Professor Dwight, took them from his hand saying, "I'll do that, my little man."

He confidently stepped to the map, but found such difficulty in placing them properly, that the children roared with laughter. Miss Brice, suppressing a smile, restrained the children, and continued the review.

"Johnie Hartman, where does the Hudson river rise?" But before Johnie could answer, much less trace it on the map, Kate, of the auburn locks, raised her voice in a mighty wail of woe.

Miss Brice passed swiftly to the child's side.

"What is it, Katherine?" she asked quietly, laying her hand on the bowed curls.

"I'm homethick," sobbed Kate.

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"An' we wan' to go home," cried Beth, joining in with wet sympathy.

"I want to sthee my Mama," came tearfully from Kate.

"Me, too," echoed Beth.

"Now, children," said Miss Brice firmly, "you might just as well stop crying, for you can't go home before Thanksgiving."

She was answered by a louder and more prolonged wail as several other children joined Kate and Beth.

"Stop, Kate," she pleaded, "and the others will."

Now, the blind children dearly loved Dr. Hunt and considered it a great treat to be noticed by him. With Kate and Beth he was an especial favorite, and at this psychological moment a bright idea germinated, and rapidly developed, in Kate's fertile mind. Crying louder, if possible, she said between sobs: "I want—to go—to see—Dr. Hunt—"

"an' we'll ax him to let us go home," finished Beth, giving Miss Brice a winsome smile through her tears.

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Miss Brice, seeing that more children were crying, wavered. Although her words were brave, her voice betrayed her to the sensitive ears of the blind children.

"I am sure Dr. Hunt is too busy," she said lamely.

"I want to ax Dr. Hunt," wailed Kate and Beth in unison.

"Well," hesitated Miss Brice—and was lost.

"Pleath, pleath, Miss Brice, can't we?" pleaded Beth. "We're tho homethick."

"Yes, you may go, but hurry back, children."

Hand in hand the two little blind girls entered Dr. Hunt's study when his hearty "Come in" answered their knock.

The supreme delight at visiting their beloved Dr. Hunt chased all thought of homesickness from the children's minds, and their faces, although glistening with tear drops, were bright with smiles.

"Well, children, what is it?" asked the Doctor kindly.

"Why—Dr. Hunt—" commenced Kate, then stopped, vainly groping for the cause

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of this wonderful visit. "Oh, yeth!" she went on, smiling more broadly as she remembered her errand. "Now I know. We're tho homethick—"

"An' we want to see our Mamas nawful bad—" interrupted Beth.

"An' Papas," added Kate.

"An' Bridget—" put in Beth.

"An' the chickens—" from Kate, as she hopped from one foot to the other.

"An' my little whitsie rabbit with pinky eyes!" cried Beth, clapping her tiny hands.

Dr. Hunt blinked rapidly in his effort to smother the great laugh welling up in him at the sight of the dreadfully homesick little girls, their homesickness forgotten, and their faces beaming through their tears.

"What is it you want me to do?" he asked, taking a little hand in each of his.

"We want to go home," repeated Kate.

"An' we want your permitten," added Beth.

"But I must ask your Mothers and Fathers first, children."

"You *do*?" asked Kate, her face all

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astonishment. "Aint that funny, Beth? He hast to ax permittens just like we do him. Don't you Dr. Hunt?"

"Yes, child, and I will write today. Now run back to Miss Brice and your lessons."

"Now, you be sure to," cautioned Kate, half way to the door.

"Don't fordet," warned Beth as they moved on.

"I won't, girls. You can depend on me," answered Dr. Hunt, patiently.

As they reached the door he heard Kate say to Beth, "When I det as big as Dr. Hunt you bet *I* won't ax permittens."

CHAPTER EIGHT

ON the 31st of October the air was vibrant with mystery, occasioned by each blind child, between the ages of eight and fourteen, receiving an invitation written in New York point.

The invitations in themselves were a beautiful mystery. They were embossed, so that the children could trace on one a pumpkin, in relief; on another a witch and cat; and on still another, a beautiful fairy.

They had found them under their plates at breakfast, and, as Helen discovered hers first, it was generally conceded that she read it aloud, which she did, while the others, with their finger tips, traced the similar wording on their own.

"At one tap of the bell," read Helen, "you are commanded to present yourself

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at the side entrance of the kindergarten—”

“Mine says ‘two taps,’” “Mine says ‘three’ ” “Mine ‘four,’” came from different parts of the table.

They were so excited that many plates went almost untouched; but what was an everyday affair like breakfast, compared to these bewitchingly embossed invitations.

All day the children were restless. Even the most studious and conscientious could not prevent mental visions of pumpkins, witches, fairies, and goblins, intervening between their lessons and their mind’s eye.

When Miss Hicken asked Johnie Blake to spell category, he got as far as c-a-t-cat, when the embossed vision of the witch and cat on his invitation took hold of his little mind, and he stood spelling c-a-t-cat, c-a-t-cat, over and over, as he mentally followed the flight of the old witch on the broomstick with the cat perched on her shoulder. Needless to say, he went to the “foot,” a place unknown to him before. Miss Hicken gave no reprimand, for Johnie Blake was her very best speller.

In the arithmetic class she asked Carla

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to tell her how many cows she would have left if she sold nine of the seventeen she owned, and Carla had promptly answered "eight *pumpkins*." Helen, who was sitting next her, dug her elbow into Carla's nearest side in a vain attempt to have her correct her statement before too late.

"Yes," answered Miss Hicken, "if we sold pumpkins from pumpkins we would have pumpkins left, but we were speaking of *cows*. Now," she continued, seeing it was impossible to keep the children's minds from the all-absorbing topic of the day, "Helen, if I make ten pies from one of the pumpkins, how many can I make from the eight I have?"

Helen's answer was correctly and promptly given; as were all others to questions propounded with witches, jack-o-lanterns, fairies and like enticing subjects for the foundation.

When they had finished their six o'clock dinner, and the seven o'clock bell had rung, they became fidgety to the extreme, and were in a highly excited state, bordering on hysteria, when, at seven-thirty, they

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heard one tap of the bell, summoning Helen to the kindergarten. It was as if an electric shock ran through each of their little bodies, and those who did not actually jump, were, nevertheless thrilling inwardly from their crowns to their toes. They clung close to Helen, and Carla almost choked her, so loath was she to let her dearest friend go alone into this mysterious region. She went with her as far as she dared, when, with a parting hug and kiss, she fled down the big hall, and up the stairway to the waiting group, as if all the witches and goblins in creation were at her heels.

Helen was greeted by two outstretched hands from two ghostly figures, stationed one on each side of the door. She could not *see* them, it is true; but I doubt if a seeing child could have felt more delicious thrills than she. She felt the mystery of their flowing robes and muffled voices. Robes, that refused to disclose, to her sensitive touch, the loved one they enfolded; voices, that refused recognition to her excited hearing. This mystery was allayed,

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and rendered harmless, by the sweet perfume that greeted her nostrils as a fresh carnation was put into her hand.

As they led her down the long room decorated with brooms, stuffed cats, and lighted by pumpkin jack-o-lanterns, whose warmth she felt as she passed, the ghostly figures sang softly:

*"Little guest, little guest,
We greet you tonight;
You have nothing to fear,
Just trust, all is right.
The goblins, you, maybe,
Expected to see,
But instead we will show you
Sweet fairies so wee."*

Then, to soft, tinkling music they led her around the room, guiding her little hands, as they wandered over the witches, cats, and fairies.

This march of enjoyment ended, she was seated in a small chair and informed by a sweet high-toned voice that when each succeeding guest was escorted around the room if she would say "Oh!" every time

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the word fairy, cat, goblin, or witch was mentioned she would be rewarded by the Queen of the Fairies.

By the time the children had all been admitted the chorus of "Oh's" was large in volume, and rich in pleasure.

Helen recited "The Goblins'll Git You If You Don't Watch Out," and Miss Schmalley sang the "Earl King." Then they threw apple parings over their shoulders, the teachers telling them the initials they formed as they fell. They cracked jokes and nuts at the same time; eating the latter and laughing merrily over the funny stories. There was an old witch who told fortunes, and the children delighted to feel her fringed shawl, and pointed cap, and to hear the little bell on the very tip of the cap, jingle, jingle, as she nodded her head.

At last, they marched around and around the room, singing "John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the ground," and at each round a child would drop from the end of the procession, and a word was dropped from the chorus, until one child,

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alone, marched the last round singing,

"John — — — John — — —

*John — — — John — — as we go
marching on."*

Good-nights followed, and the very tired, but very happy little blind children, trooped up the broad stairway to the dormitories above.

CHAPTER NINE

THE Saturday morning after the Hallowe'en party, Carla was summoned to Dr. Hunt's study. The superintendent told her of a letter he had received from Mr. Winston saying her father was far from well. He went on to suggest that Carla might like to make him a short visit, so the girls' supervisor would get her ready and Miss Hicken would take her home.

Carla could not see Dr. Hunt's face; but something told her matters were worse than he had intended her knowing. At first she was panic-stricken and covered her face with her hands.

The superintendent laid his hand kindly on her shoulder.

"It seems pretty bad, Carla, but may end better than we think. Lately you have

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improved greatly, and I am depending on you to be a credit to me and a comfort to your parents."

He could not have appealed to her more directly. It was the first time in her experience that anyone had "depended" on her, and to have Dr. Hunt, her beloved superintendent, do so, was strengthening.

"There is a wise Power back of us, Carla, from which we can draw courage—not all at once—but moment my moment, day by day. Now, good-bye. I know you will be brave, my child."

Carla advanced toward him, her hands extended, reaching for the features she had never before had the courage to "feel." Dr. Hunt was seated at his desk, which brought his face on a level with her hands. Surmising her desire he allowed her to run her finger tips lightly over his face.

"Thank you," she said as her hands dropped to her sides, "I will be strong, and brave. You *can* depend on me."

An hour later the "blind" surrey, with Joe in the harness, was carrying Carla and Miss Hicken to the train that was to

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take them to Carla's dilapidated home, and sick father.

As Carla re-traveled the distance she had covered three times before, twice to the school, and once home for vacation, she did not recall any but the first. How vividly she remembered her mother's impatience with her. She had been saucy to her mother, then; she regretted it now, and realized that her mother had not even had the advantages that a little over a year at the school had given her.

Her father had been extra kind that day. Feeling deeply the separation from his little daughter, he had tried in his rough way to soothe her, knowing the new environment was trying to her inexperience.

She even remembered how frightened she had felt when she had let her hand wander over the plush seat, and it seemed so big she thought it an immense animal. She knew better now.

"My! but I've learned a lot!" she exclaimed.

"What is it?" asked her teacher, who

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had been buried in a magazine.

"I know so much," said Carla. Then, she told her of her first ride on the train, and how badly she had felt at leaving Spat. She explained that Spat had lost an ear in one fight and his tail in another; but that was when he was not old enough to know it was wrong to fight.

"His hair is softer than even yours, Miss Hicken. You won't mind me saying it, 'cause he and Dad were my very first friends—before I ever saw you."

Miss Hicken assured her she was not offended, and Carla rattled on, giving the teacher a pretty clear picture of the barrenness of the child's early life.

Miss Hicken repressed a sigh. She, too, had learned much in the short time she had been at the school, and her heart was burdened with the thought of how many of God's little ones were paying the penalty in blindness for the sins and the ignorance of their parents.

"We'll see 'em, soon, Miss Hicken, we'll see 'em soon," cried Carla, interrupting the teacher's line of thought. "I can feel

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we are almost there. I know the whistle before our station."

Sure enough, the train gradually slowed and the porter shouted, "Crowel."

They had scarcely time to gather their luggage when Mr. Winton boarded the car, and hurried them off of the train, and into the rickety, springless wagon waiting to take them to Carla's home.

The minister had done what he could to make the sick man more comfortable and the house presentable. He had hired a woman to clean windows and had persuaded the mother to scrub the floor. He himself had blacked and shined the rusty stove.

Miss Hicken stayed until just time to catch the last train Sunday night. The time during her stay was spent in concocting nourishing soups for the sick man, and in other little plans for his betterment. She also taught Carla how to make the dishes, and impressed upon her mind how essential cleanliness is to health. The girl proved apt, and gave promise of being capable enough, with Mr. Winston's help,

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to take charge after the teacher left.

She fulfilled her promise to the superintendent to the best of her ability, and the sick man gradually grew better. When he was able to bear it, he enjoyed hearing Carla tell of the school, Dr. Hunt, and Helen. She repeated much of the latter's wise philosophy. It sank deep into the mind of the sick man, and the woman who sat somewhat apart, in her ignorance imbibed it to a small degree. The blind girl also sang him the school songs and hymns.

Best of all he liked to hear her play her violin. He loved music almost as well as she, and it seemed that the longings of his soul, which he had but partly understood, found rest in his daughter's talent. In the evening, especially, she often played him to sleep—the soothing sleep that heals because the mind is cleared of the day's debris.

It was not easy for Carla to be a ministering angel, and at times she was greatly discouraged. While she felt a new compassion for her mother, her uncouthness still grated on the girl's sensitive fibre.

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Sometimes she fled from the cabin, and took refuge in the wild wood near by until she had herself in hand again, and felt she could be depended on to the degree that Dr. Hunt expected.

One day after a longer period than usual in the woods, occasioned by an exceedingly trying morning, she unfolded to her father Helen's plan for her future.

"Ye kin do it, girl. Why, ye kin play good as them concert folks now," he had encouraged her.

"No, no, Dad. I am just beginning to see how little I know about music—and yet,—yes, I will do it some day," she finished, remembering her moments of elation at the musical examinations when she had made the blind children laugh and cry.

During the conversation about Carla becoming a public player, the mother showed more signs of interest than usual. Her eyes took on a greedy look, and her restless fingers seemed already handling the gold that would accrue from the girl's talent.

"Them player folks git a lot of money

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fur jest one night," she remarked.

Carla turned toward her mother at the interruption, shuddered, she knew not why, and replied:

"Helen says that our greatness is a part of our advancement, and that the money will take care of itself without us a-bothering, if we do the best we know."

"Yes, yes," soothed the woman, "but it's jest as well to look out a little when the cash 's 'round."

Seeing the futility of changing her mother's mood, Carla took up her violin and played for hours.

After a few weeks of the really good nursing and entertaining Carla gave her father, he was well enough for her return to her studies, to which she must devote herself strenuously in order to make up the lessons missed.

CHAPTER TEN

AFTER a week of snow storms Thanksgiving Day dawned clear and biting cold. As Hans, the burly Swede who attended the horses and did odd jobs, said, "The thermometer was dirty underneath."

The previous week had been filled with suppressed excitement, aggravated by spicy odors from the great kitchen below. All sorts of the good things that have delighted the gastronomic nerve of children, and their elders, since the first Thanksgiving Day were in process of baking and brewing for this first holiday of the school year.

The season had its softening effect. Even Hans had been more lenient, and had but seldom answered a childish request, made at an inopportune time, with:

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"I don't got no time."

And now the great day was really here, and although the eyes of the majority of the children could not discern the faintest ray of the brilliant sun which was changing old, grey Autumn to a fine lady decked with ermine and diamonds, their little feet kept time to the merry tune-beats of their small hearts. True, their eyes could not sparkle, but their faces shone and their voices rang with gladness.

The chapel exercises that morning were impressive. Glad young voices were lifted in thanksgiving to a higher Power, which had surrounded them with so many blessings.

There was but one sad time, and that was when the Senior Chorus sang "Lead Kindly Light." Miss Schmally had not wanted them to sing that hymn, but it was a great favorite with the older pupils, and they had begged so hard that it be included in the program, that she had at last given her consent. There was not a dry eye among the visitors and teachers as row after row of young blind boys and girls

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sang the beautiful song:

*"Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling
gloom,*

Lead Thou me on.

The night is dark and I am far from home;

Lead Thou me on.

*Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
the distant scene,*

One step enough for me."

This temporary gloom was dispelled by the mighty burst of gladness that rang out as they gave, "Thanks be to God for his Unspeakable Gift."

Later, the big blind girls and boys attended services at the church down town. The younger children, under the supervision of the Matron and Miss Hicken, gathered around the piano in the Orchestra room and sang songs to their hearts' content: hymns, school songs, sober songs, and funny songs; in fact whatever fancy dictated, for this was one of the few days when they ruled. Someone suggested they play tag, and they had great fun in tagging Mrs. De Journette and Miss Hicken, who had all they could do

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to step quickly and lightly enough to escape the little super-sensitive ears.

When they were tired with the game they were bundled into warm coats, hoods and mittens and turned loose on the grounds to get up an appetite for the one o'clock dinner.

The snow was deep and they had great fun snow-balling, washing faces, and building a giant snowman. They nearly came to grief over the snowman when Jim Baker proposed putting a broomstick in his arm in lieu of a musket. Helen firmly declared it would be sacrilege; just like declaring war on Thanksgiving Day. She made a counter proposal that Jim tack a piece of wood across the broomstick, converting it into a cross; a symbol more in keeping with the day. Some of the children sided with Jim; but more with Helen.

The controversy waxed so warm that the cold-hearted cause was in imminent danger. Finally Carla came to the rescue by shouting over the tumult:

"Let's take a vote, like the house of paramount."

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Not a child, including Carla, knew the meaning of the word paramount, or parliament, but the mystery of its syllables caught their ears and fired their imaginations. The vote was quickly taken. Helen's side won; not as a matter of opinion, but, as in larger affairs, by her personal influence.

Jim Baker stoutly refused to lend a hand to the securing, or tacking, of the cross-piece to the broom-handle. Carla, in whose memory remained a shadow of the nightmare she had experienced during her two weeks separation from Helen, and who felt in her heart that Jim was partly to blame (for if he had not forsaken her as he had, who could say that she might not have returned, to the school undetected), again rescued the cause and at the same time satisfied her desire for revenge.

"Run, kid," she commanded Kate, "and get a nail and hammer from Hans. And if he says he 'don't got no time' you make him. An' Donald," she coaxed, "you go like a good boy an' pull a lath off'n your

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chicken coop."

Before Carla had finished speaking, Kate had disappeared in search of Hans. Donald, hypnotized by the phrase "*your* chicken coop" into the belief that it really belonged to him, hurried through the flying snow to the back of the Superintendent's cottage, and the deed was as good as accomplished.

It is true Donald tore his best trousers getting the lath, a nail in the end of which seemed to hold a personal grudge against him. And, Kate, not finding Hans on the first floor, and feeling, from the condition of her little blue fingers, that he must be firing the furnace, felt her way to the basement stairs, and, missing a step, tumbled head over heels at his feet. Carla, brave as the best and ready to suffer for the cause, and her own feelings, but being unused to driving nails, mashed her thumb. But they scorned to make a fuss, since the snowman held the cross, and the "other side" was beaten.

One o'clock found them a merry, rosy-cheeked crowd gathered around the well-

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spread table, the odors from which were enough to fill the stone heart of a heathen idol with thankfulness.

Those who could see at all exclaimed over the red of the cranberry sauce, and the yellow of the golden pumpkin pies; those who could not, were content with the satisfaction of their other senses.

Jim Baker was unfortunate in spilling his sauce as he waved it between his eyes and the window in an attempt to catch the reflected glow. Luckily it was Thanksgiving Day so he was wiped off, and his saucer refilled.

When the inner man was well satisfied, and they had come to nuts and candy, the intellect demanded attention, and Carla, who usually put the finishing touch to every occasion, sometimes artistic, but oftener not, asked Helen to "recite one of her poetries."

Helen, with unaffected directness, as yet unspoiled by worldly criticism, gave:

*"There was a little mouse
Who lived in a great big house,*

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*He nibbled and gnawed
Till he rawed his nose
And then he wished he was a cat."*

The children clapped with a vigor to inspire any seeker of public applause to greater efforts, so when Beth begged for another story "'bout dear little Arabella," Helen was ready to respond.

"It ought to by rights be 'bout a turkey," suggested Carla.

"Well, I guess Arabella had a turkey," said Helen, drawing on her ever convenient and accommodating imagination. "Yes, she did," she went on, "and it was the gobbliest turkey you ever saw. And it roosted in a tree by her house every single night. And the tree was so big it reached to the top of the house, and the house was so big it reached to the top of the tree, and sometimes it roosted on the house, and—"

"How did it det up?" wondered Beth.

"It climbed," answered Carla, before Helen had time to speak.

"It did not, Carla," came severely from

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Helen. "Turkeys do not climb. It flew up, clear from the ground to the top."

To the children, Helen's word was law, so the discussion left the turkey where it found him, and the story proceeded:

"Dear little Arabella loved her turkey just like we do our doll babies, and she petted it, and rocked it to sleep—"

"I thought roostin' meant sleepin'," put in Kate, her voice and face full of bewilderment.

Helen was equal to almost every occasion, especially one requiring nothing more than a little doctoring of a tale. She hastened to rectify the mistake, and quiet the minds of her audience as quickly as possible, that she might hurry on with the thrilling events in the life of Arabella and the turkey.

"I was speaking," she said quietly, "of its *afternoon nap*. It did roost on the house at night, that is, when it didn't roost in the tree tip-top. Well, anyway, Arabella didn't mind if it did gobble some, it always did it soft when she was around. But she had an old step-father that

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couldn't sleep because he was so wicked, and he blamed it on the turkey—"

"'Cause he was *bad*?" put in Carla. "I wisht I had a turkey."

"Of course not," said Helen decidedly, "because he couldn't *sleep*, and one night when it gobbled just a teeny little bit, to work the stiffness out of its throat (it had the rheumatism of the neck) he threw a great big sofa pillow at it, and knocked it down off the house tip-top, and killed it dead."

Her listeners were holding their breath and she could fairly feel the suspense in the air. She hastened on before anyone should speak and break the spell:

"And dear little Arabella cried, and cried. And it was the day before Thanksgiving, and the wicked old step-father just cut its head off—"

"U-ugh," shuddered Carla, but no one else spoke and Helen went on: "And cut it into pieces to cook for dinner—"

"Helen, you forgot something," reminded Jim.

"I think not," commenced Helen, who

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resented interruptions in the most thrilling parts of her tale.

But Jim was persistent.

"Feathers," he laughed, "I don't never want to eat turkey with the feathers on."

"I hadn't got to where he cooked it yet," said Helen with dignity. "You're so impertinent, Jim. Of course, he picked it. I forgot to say that Arabella's step-father always did things different from other people, and he was going to pick it *after* he cut it up."

"Oh! Oh!" came in conciliatory chorus from different parts of the table.

"Go on. It's dandy," came from Carla, who now seldom used a stronger word.

Helen, mollified by the crowd's approval, good-naturedly continued:

"And when he cut it open there was a big doll inside of it, one that cried, and a cradle for the doll—"

"And a ball," "and a train," "and a sled," put in the other children. Carla, as usual, came out best.

"An' a orto fer dear little Arabella to ride in!" she shouted.

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Helen, seeing that the story was being wrenched, as it were, from her, hastily interrupted with an ending:

"—so, you see the step-father was so surprised, and dear little Arabella so happy, that they forgot to pick the turkey, the pieces he meant to, and he slept all the time, and dear little Arabella laughed and played till she died."

"Oh! Oh!" came in mournful chorus from all sides of the table.

"Well, she didn't exactly *die*," conceded Helen, as she always did, when, having had Arabella depart this life she thought of a loophole through which her imagination could easily bring her back. "Well, she played so hard that she *fainted*."

Many of the children, not knowing but that to faint was even worse than to die, gave voice to another lugubrious chorus, which Helen answered at once:

"—yes, and her fairy god-mother touched her with a feather from her darling turkey's wing, and she came alive, only she wasn't truly dead," she explained conscientiously, "and she lived happy until

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she was an old woman, and then she did die—yes, she did, and you needn't say 'Oh!' for she *did die* when she got to be *old*, and I won't bring her alive again, when I make her dead after she gets *old*, I'm going to have it my way *some*—"

Helen was getting excited and the other children looked irritated and disappointed, so the Matron thinking it best to interfere, the table was dismissed and the children scattered over the building.

At five o'clock Miss Hicken, who was on duty all day, called them to the big kitchen to pull candy and make popcorn balls. She was assisted by Mrs. De Journette, and the two were kept busy, for each little blind girl must have a piece to pull.

"Miss Hicken, can't we have a potato race?" importuned Carla, after the candy lay in twisted snakes on the platters, and the popcorn balls were heaped generously on plates, and they had eaten their fill.

Miss Hicken threw up her hands in amazement.

"Where on earth did you ever hear of a

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potato race?" she asked.

"They always have them at the country fairs at home," vouched Carla.

"You really wouldn't enjoy it, children—" the teacher commenced, but the little arms were around her neck, and the entreaty in the childish voices was having its effect. The convincing argument was "that they wanted to do things that seeing people did." So her consent was won, and all who could see at all were blindfolded, that the race might be fair. With baskets, pails, boxes, in fact, anything that could be persuaded to hold the trophies, they patiently felt for the potatoes arranged in straight rows across the big kitchen floor. The room resounded with the merry voices, as they bobbed up and down, picking up the potatoes.

Helen, who was guiding herself by means of her foot and a crack in the floor, had progressed faster than the other children, and had by far the greater number of potatoes. She undoubtedly would have won the race, had not Carla, in her eagerness, run against her upsetting, not only

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Helen, but the precious potatoes. Carla was so sorry that Helen, knowing that neither could win as things stood, slyly put what potatoes she could gather into her little chum's basket. This so swelled Carla's number that she came out with flying colors.

But Carla was not satisfied.

"I didn't really win, Miss Hicken, 'cause I knocked Helen's potatoes out," she insisted.

But Miss Hicken, having seen Helen's little act of unselfishness, assured the young blind victor that such things were to be expected in races, and tied the blue ribbon on Carla's arm.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ONE Saturday, about midway between Thanksgiving and Christmas, proved to be a red-letter day for Carla. If she had been expecting it, it might not have proven a red-letter day of such brilliant, scarlet radiance. But coming as it did, in the fullness of a complete surprise, its almost overpowering, scintillating brightness was undimmed by anticipation. Helen came in for a share; but to Carla it came in its effulgence. And it made, this beautiful surprise, a telling and somewhat lasting effect on the blind child's nature.

She had gotten up as usual that morning and had washed and dressed and eaten her breakfast just as on other mornings, with no hint that it was to be a red-letter day.

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On her way from the dining-room she had reached and covered half the length of the long hall that ran across, and at right angles, to the broad, short, entrance hall. Suddenly she stopped as a familiar step fell on her ear. It was far more familiar than any at the school, and, feeling her way swiftly along the wall, she was half way to the owner of the voice, before she heard him asking the maid for her.

With an ear-splitting cry of joy she flung herself upon him, a quivering, pulsating child; her whole lank frame an expression of delight.

“Oh, Mr. Winston! Mr. Winston! Is it really, truly you?”

Having assured her repeatedly that it was really himself, and that he had come to visit her now, as he could not leave his parish at Christmas time, he finally succeeded in drawing her into the reception room.

He seated her comfortably on the davenport beside him. One moment she snuggled close, hungry for a caress; the

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next, bounced away, as the joy that had come to her flashed from top to toe in an electrifying shock.

After hearing the home news, she asked again:

"An' Dad; how is dear old Daddy? No, I ain't forgot Spat. He's well, ain't he, Mr. Winston?" Not waiting for an answer, she went on rapidly: "I couldn't stand it if anything happened to Spat."

He assured her they were all well, including Spat.

"Is his hair as soft as it was?"

"Yes. Your father faithfully scrubs him every two weeks."

"An' are ye teachin' Dad the New York Point, so's he kin write to me?" She put the question wistfully, for she missed something when the other blind girls received their scroll-like letters from home and the mail brought her none.

The young pastor shrank from telling her of his labors with her illiterate father, who must be taught spelling, as well as Point, before he could frame even the simplest of letters to his daughter. And

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it would have hurt Carla now, as it would not have done a year ago. She had been brought in contact with knowledge, and, by comparison, recognized ignorance. Mercifully she did not realize what it meant that her father could not read. She in no way connected it with the fact that he did not write her. Once Helen had spoken of her father and mother reading to her, when at home, and Carla had wondered why no one had read to her. Helen divining, by that fine super-sensitiveness of hers, what the trouble was, kept Carla in ignorance, and did not mention the subject again.

Carla was as hungry for knowledge as a poisoned animal is for water, and now she ran glibly from one subject to another, enlightening the minister as to her progress.

She insisted on bringing in Helen, and ran from the room in search of her.

The young pastor gave a deep, sympathetic sigh, that seemed to come from the very tip of his carefully polished shoes. But Carla was certainly not an object of

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pity when she returned, in her eagerness dragging Helen by the arm, her face scintillating with joy.

The young man started toward them to remove a chair that was directly in their path. He did not reach it in time, and was amazed to see Helen calmly guide Carla around it.

"How did you do it?" The question was a clear-cut exclamation point.

"Do what?" asked Carla, answering question with question.

"Why didn't she run against that chair?"

"Tell him, Helen," cried Carla proudly. "This is Helen," she added. "Tell him why you never run into things," she insisted.

The young minister advanced and took Helen's hand in his.

"So this is Carla's best friend," he said kindly. "She has chosen well," he continued in an undertone.

"If she won't tell you, I will," declared Carla impatiently. "There's somethin' in her forehead, Mr. Winston, that tells her

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when she's a-goin' to run into anythin'. Jolly, but I wish I had it," she added, reminding of the many bumps she had received from interfering doors and walls.

"It don't speak and tell me like Carla thinks it does," said Helen, gently, "but I feel it *here*." As she spoke she brushed back the soft, dark hair from her forehead.

"Miss Hicken says it's some kind of sense. What did she call it, Helen?"

"The sixth sense," explained Helen. "But she couldn't make me understand just what it is." She said the last as if it were indeed strange that her teacher could not enlighten her on a subject that has baffled the greatest minds of the age.

"I would not bother about it," said the pastor, "as long as it protects you. This is Saturday, is it not?" he asked by way of changing the subject.

Just then the door opened to admit Dr. Hunt, who hastened forward to greet the guest.

Helen, like the little lady she was, and feeling that poor Carla would be at a loss

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what to do, stepped forward and quietly introduced Mr. Winston as "my friend."

The two men exchanged smiles as they shook hands, but Helen was blissfully unaware of anything unusual—for a friend of Carla's was surely a friend of hers as well.

After the exchange of greetings, Dr. Hunt invited the young man to occupy the guest chamber as long as he could remain with them.

Carla stood by in a glow of pride. She had often envied the other blind children their guests, and the courtesies extended them by the idolized Superintendent, and now she was admitted, by this wonderful visit, not to the entrance, but to the very holy of holies of this longed-for heaven. Mr. Winston's voice brought her to earth again.

"I suppose, Dr. Hunt, you have no objection to my giving these two young ladies a treat?"

"To be sure not, Mr. Winston. What is your plan?"

"'Uncle Tom's Cabin' is on for the

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matinee this afternoon, and I think the children will enjoy the play and there'll be *good* orchestra music," he answered.

As she heard Dr. Hunt's answer, Carla once more ascended to dizzy heights. She had never been to a theater; but Miss Hicken had read the story of Uncle Tom and Eva to them, and she knew "matinee" meant some kind of a "show."

After Dr. Hunt left them, there followed a lengthy discussion as to whether they should ride in state in the double-seated surrey drawn by the team, or take the single buggy and old Bill.

Mr. Winston doubted his ability to manage two horses, and two blind girls at one and the same time, especially as he would be obliged to either seat one girl beside him and the other on the back seat, or relegate both girls to the rear. Either method appeared equally unsatisfactory. Finally he persuaded them it would be more sociable and friendlike to have a little girl on each side of him in the single buggy with Bill. They had entertained a dream of riding in style through the streets; but

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when Mr. Winston hinted that they might have trouble, if they used the surrey, in exploring his pockets, where sometimes—he wouldn't promise that it would be so today—but sometimes—he carried toothsome confections, the dream was forgotten, as so many are, in the present reality.

The girls' Supervisor found a difficult task in dressing Carla. She hopped and jumped, and laughed and twisted, until Miss Wood was at her wits' end. But she did not scold Carla. The child's enjoyment was too genuine, and, had she not been pressed for time, she would have entered into it as much as the girl.

Mr. Winston, who had been viewing himself as little short of a self-sacrificing angel, was surprised at the ease with which the girls conducted themselves.

The snow-plow had been before them, and they rode through five-foot perpendicular walls of glistening white.

"Now we're going around the curve by the boys' hospital," said Helen, as the buggy followed the winding driveway.

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"It's a mystery to me how you know," said Mr. Winston, looking at the child as if she were preternatural.

"Oh, I can tell by lots of little things. The buggy tipped a little ways, and the wheels scraped some."

"You are a regular Sherlock Holmes," he said, admiration and wonder vicing in his voice.

"Is he a friend of yours?" asked Helen, in all innocence.

In half an hour they drew up at the entrance of the opera house.

Mr. Winston sent the buggy to a nearby livery, and escorted the little girls through the entrance to the parquet.

They were delighted with the orchestra and declared it "Almost as good as our blind orchestra."

To Helen the opera house and play were not new; but it was Carla's first experience.

As the play advanced, Mr. Winston described the scenery and stage setting, and their quick ears readily caught the voices from the stage.

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At the sound of Eva's silvery tones, Carla's face lighted with a celestial uplift; and she covered and shuddered as Le-gree's harsh voice filled the pit. Mr. Winston, becoming alarmed at the intensity with which the child was affected by the play, at times laid his hand on her, and in soothing tones assured her "It was only a play." But she sub-consciously shook him off, as an interference to something of more importance.

At the death of little Eva she broke completely down, and sobbed wildly. But as Mr. Winston described her ascension to heavenly realms, the sobs became quieter, and the convulsive working of her face was again supplanted by that celestial uplift that sat strangely on her piquant features.

She was unusually quiet during the drive back to the school, but when she and the young pastor were alone she gravely informed him that some day she would be an "actor-girl like little Eva."

CHAPTER TWELVE.

FROM Thanksgiving day on, the blind children counted the days until Christmas. The older pupils literally counted them, and somehow the result was transmitted to the little ones, and rarely could one find a child who could not tell whether it was two weeks or fourteen and a half days until the great, mid-winter holiday. Although they could not catch glimpses of the preparations going on, there were many ways by which it heralded its approach. For weeks previous there was just as much stealthy slipping away of little presents, not yet completed, as with children who have their sight. The daily hour in the sewing room and in the bead class was put to good use.

The blind children made many pres-

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ents, and at this season the necessity for reprimanding a slothful child was rare. They might, in their eagerness, break more needles and threads than usual, and they often mixed their beads, getting the red ones from the third compartment of their bead boxes into the second compartment with the blue ones, and the blue ones sometimes slipped into compartment one with the white beads; but the teachers were patient, and the mistakes made by chubby fingers were quietly rectified.

"I know what I'm going to make Miss Hicken," Helen whispered confidentially to Carla, one day in the study room.

"What?" asked Carla, bluntly jealous.

"A sofa-pillow cover."

"Like the big girls make?"

"Yes. Miss Shipman thinks I can, and I do, too," answered Helen, who had unbounded faith in her own and others' ability.

"I wisht I could make her one, too," said Carla, wistfully.

"You can, Carla, I know you can," said Helen, so confidentially that Carla felt as

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if the pillow was as good as done.

"It's awful hard. I'm feared I can't," said Carla, dejectedly.

"Oh, it's not so very hard when you know how," assured Helen. "It's *almost* easy."

"I don't see how it can be," objected Carla, "when visitors go on so over them. I heard a lady say 'bout Irene Wiley's, just the other day, 'Isn't it wonderful' (that's just the word she spoke) 'how they get those silk stitches so even on those blue and white squares?'"

"That's because she didn't know how it's done," persisted Helen. "Miss Shipman told me how, and it sounds a *little* easy, anyway. Miss Shipman takes a piece of stiff paper just the size of the pillow cover's going to be, and she draws squares on it just the size of the blue and white gingham squares. Then she takes a stylus, or a big darning needle, and punches holes right on to the pillow top with the little, rough holes outside on the paper so's we can feel them, and know where to put our needles through."

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"But the weaving of the fans and things?" objected Carla.

"Well, Carla," said Helen with something akin to disgust, "we certainly ought to be able to do the weaving by feeling the silk threads after we get the cross-stitches made."

"Maybe," half-consented the doubter. "I didn't see no paper on Irene Wiley's."

"Of course not," laughed Helen. "You didn't think the paper stayed on, did you? After you get it all worked you tear the paper off in little pieces. Mine's going to be blue and white."

"Say, Helen, what's the best color they is?" asked Carla, with more interest than she had yet shown.

"I guess red. My mother told me a story one time about a red, red rose meaning love."

"Red for mine!" shouted Carla, turning a handspring on the study-room floor.

As Christmas Day drew nearer, the building was filled with the resinous odor of pine, and from time to time was heard the mysterious, silvery tinkle of bells,

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which every child, whether blind or seeing, knows to be a foreteller of the coming of old Santa.

Fully as much care was expended on the decoration of the tree as though the children could see the wonderful ornaments. It was strung from top to base with electric lights, in order that they might, without danger, get as close as they wished to the tree. And they fairly hugged it, as they pressed near, feeling the presents and decorations. There was a real Santa, with fur-bordered and snow-flecked garments, who dispersed the gifts in his usual apple-cheeked, good-natured way. Each little girl received a doll, and each boy "something that would make a noise."

Miss Hicken was delighted with the cushion covers presented her by Helen and Carla. The two girls had worked in such close proximity that the pale blue one worked by Helen was streaked here and there with a scarlet thread, while Carla's bright red one had a pale blue square ever so often. But the teacher thanked them

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with tear-dimmed eyes, and treasured them carefully.

Helen's father and mother sent a unique present to her and Carla. It was a "blind" checker board, with the alternating squares depressed. The black men were square and the white ones round, while the "crowns" for the kings had each a little round hole in the center to distinguish them from the common men.

Mr. Winston did not forget to reward Carla's musical efforts with the promised violin. The child's ecstasy was almost painful to see, as she laughed and wept over the instrument, caressing the satin wood with her long fingers, which were fast becoming shapely.

At last it was over. The last light was out, and the pupils scattered to their different dormitories to sleep more peacefully than they had for weeks.

"God bless them," said Miss Hicken softly as she stood in the door of the little girls' dormitory, and looked around on the sleeping, sweet child-faces. Each little body was snugly tucked in by warm blan-

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kets, and each little face, rosy in slumber,
was made sweeter by the mother-touch lent
by the dolls, each clasped tightly by a pair
of small, loving arms.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE beautiful Christmas spirit was not long in wearing off. In a month's time it was as ragged and defaced as the children's toys. One doll had lost her nose; another, as the result of a small mother's desire to satisfy an investigating mind and determine for herself whether her baby's orbs "worked like real seeing eyes," had in lieu of them two vacant almond-shaped spaces.

With the passing of the toys, there passed, also, the spirit of love, forgiveness and unselfishness, born of the desire to do something for someone else. For the time it had passed, and, though some day in a sudden crisis of life, the vision of the Christ-child, as brought to their senses on these occasions, might stay an evil cur-

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rent, there was at present no apparent effect on the lives of the children.

Following close on the heels of the Holidays, came the preparation for the "Spring Concert." This event belonged entirely to the children. As Commencement was to the older pupils, so was the spring concert to the little ones. The excitement of Christmas past, all thought and effort was directed to the children's concert. Miss Schmalley's ambition for her charges was so unbounded, and indomitable, and such difficult feats were attempted and accomplished, that a long time was needed for the necessary drilling. The date set for the occasion was May 15th, and it required untiring application on the part of teachers and pupils during these several months to present to the public an entertainment above criticism.

There were to be the usual piano solos, duets and trios, with choruses rendered by sweet child-voices. Then, too, there would be speeches by girls and boys, dialogues and little plays. But the crowning feature

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was a surprise, kept profoundly secret from Dr. Hunt and all but the music teachers. Helen, Carla and Lilly Lambert, three totally blind children, were to give the "Three Little Maids from School" from the Mikado.

Miss Schmalley did not realize, until she was well into it, what an undertaking it was. First, the children must be taught to skip, a performance of which they were wholly ignorant. Both her own and the children's patience was endless. First she skipped in one spot, with the children attempting to feel her knees and feet. Then they bravely endeavored to put the impression gained through their sensitive finger tips into practice. The result was a conglomerated scrambling, tumbling and falling of the little blind girls.

Miss Schmalley then tried to make Helen skip by dropping on her knees before her and moving the child's little legs with her hands, while Carla and Lily supported her in an upright position. At times they laughed; at others, were on the verge of tears; but finally, as so often in

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life, at a discouraged moment, the triumph came and the feat was accomplished.

Next they were taught to skip in unison and in time to music, to the front of the stage. This, after the first few days, they did nicely, invariably stopping at the same place within two feet of the foot-lights.

By the middle of April, things were going nicely. Success was imminent, when mumps made their appearance among the pupils. First one, and then another of the children was sent to the hospital, until it became an unspoken decision that there would be no spring concert. Miss Schmalley had quietly kept the "Three Little Maids" to themselves, hoping they might escape, but April Twentieth marked Helen for a victim.

Carla's grief over Helen's disaster was somewhat assuaged by the May baskets that were yearly hung with gay ribbons to the door knobs of the various bed-rooms. While the other children chatted and laughed, Carla, usually the gayest of every gathering, sat in silence, a great undertaking, simple in execution, but bristling with

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untried danger, formulating in her active mind. She worked away on her basket with intense concentration until it was finished. When completed, and filled with spring flowers, she carefully wrote "Helen Elwood, with love from Carla," with her stylus on "point" paper. This she tied to the handle with a pale blue ribbon.

The night of April the Thirtieth, she stole quietly from the main building, glided swiftly along the gravel driveway and up the walk to the hospital. When she reached the steps, she tip-toed up them and along the porch. Reaching the door, she noiselessly turned the knob and entered the hall. With her hands she felt her way along the wall until she came to the third door, on the knob of which she tied the little basket. She glided stealthily back to the front door, along the porch, down the steps and back to the main building. Gaining her dormitory, she slipped from her clothes to her night dress, jumped into bed and lay there shivering deliciously with the daring of her act, and

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dreams of Helen's enjoyment of the May basket.

As a result of her devotion, Helen was scarcely recovered when Carla was taken to the hospital. As Helen had had the mumps on both sides, she was allowed to visit Carla, who proved a very restless patient.

One day when Carla was convalescing, she was sitting in a big rocker, warmly wrapped in blankets. Helen in a small chair not far from her, was making Carla's doll a new hat. The little invalid's active fingers were, for the once, resting listlessly in her lap.

"Would you like a ribbon, or a feather on it, Carla?" asked Helen, laying the diminutive headgear on the other little girl's knee. Carla fingered it absently.

"I don't care," she answered carelessly, then added abruptly, "I wisht I'd a-made that May basket when you was first took."

"First took? What do you mean?" asked Helen, taking her unappreciated millinery effort from Carla's lap.

"With the mumps," explained Carla.

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"Why?" was Helen's next question.

"Well, don't you see?" went on Carla, irritably, "if I'd a-hung it sooner, I'd caught 'em quicker and we could-a-been sick together."

"That's so," came slowly from Helen, as she absorbed the full import of Carla's reasoning. "Why didn't one of us think of it?"

"Don't know," said Carla, shortly. "Only it's always that way. Nothin' ever comes like we want it. Did you ever notice that, Helen?"

"What?" asked Helen.

"That things come jest the way we don't want 'em. I've seen it a long time, so when I want the sun to shine I jest keep a-saying, 'I hope the sun won't shine. I hope the sun won't shine,' and pretty soon, out it'll come."

Helen looked thoughtful.

"Wouldn't that be a lie, Carla?" she asked presently, "'cause you really want it to shine all the time you say you hope it won't."

"Don't know," Carla, answered, care-

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lessly, "it works if you keep it up long 'nough."

"It's a lot easier to make good things happen by thinking *good*," said Helen. "I guess the sun jest happened to come out, or you must have had a better thought than the 'lie' one away back somewhere, and God saw *that*. It makes you happier when things happen *right*. It seems like to *think* one thing when you *mean* another would twist you up somehow."

"It does," admitted Carla, "an' I am tired out an' never feel quite happy when I do make the sun shine *that* way."

"Oh, goodness! There goes the second dinner bell," cried Helen, hastily gathering up her ribbons and flowers. "I know I'll be late," she kept saying between pecks at Carla's rounded cheeks, and away she ran.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ONE morning about the first of May Miss Schmalley dictated the last of Helen's piano solo, and the little girl, with stylus and tablet transmitted it by the New York Point System to the "point" paper.

Later in the day she sat in one of the music rooms memorizing it. The fingers of her left hand ran slowly over the system of dots which covered the paper in her lap. As the left hand conveyed the notes to her mind, it in turn sent the message to the right hand, and in as many minutes a half dozen measures were memorized. Then the hands changed places and the right hand traced the dots, while the left fingers brought forth the message from the keys. When she had mastered a half

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dozen measures of bass and treble, she discarded the "point" and played both hands until it was as perfect as practice could make it. This accomplished, she took the next bars, and so on, until she had committed the whole page.

So engrossed was she with her task she did not hear the door open, and was unaware of another presence until she felt two long arms around her and found herself in Carla's fond, but weak, embrace. The two girls laughed and cried for joy at their re-union and were soon discussing the past, present and future.

The concert formed the greater part of the conversation. Helen was doubtful as to Carla's strength to carry out her part; but Carla, though still very weak in the knees, valiantly laughed at the idea.

"There ain't much danger of me not being plenty able to do it by that time," she declared. "Us blind stiffs ain't so easy knocked out after all."

Helen, not having the heart to correct her little friend's slang, much less scold her, gently patted her thin hand.

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"An' Helen, just think, only one month after the spring concert I'll see Spat, an' Father and Mr. Winston. Ain't he the loveliest dog you ever see?"

"Mr. Winston?" laughed Helen.

"But then," went on Carla, less buoyantly, "we'll have to leave each other for three long, long months. There it is again. I never feel happy over anything less something else makes me sad."

"Let's not think about it, dear, till the very day comes and we have to. Let's be just as happy as can be—even then. You know we can't be so terrible far away from each other if we're thinking real good about our own selves, an' each other, an' everybody else."

The dark days in store for Carla, through whose refining fires she must pass before she emerged into the glorious, joy-out fulfillment of her womanhood were mercifully hidden.

A week passed, ten days, three days more, and the morning of the concert dawned without a cloud. All day the little girls went through their tasks with

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straight hair braided tight to crimp, and soft hair wound in "kids" and rags to curl, and their little minds in a lovely whirl.

Early in the evening the hair, faces and bodies were, as by a touch, transformed. A gingham-aproned girl with hair in rags entered her dormitory at seven o'clock and emerged at eight a veritable fairy.

The many colored ribbons and sashes produced a rainbow effect pleasing to the eyes of the "seeing" people, and to the touch of the blind, who, as they passed their hands lightly over the bedecked forms, gave vent to their appreciation.

At the first strains of the "blind" orchestra, many a small heart thumped loudly. But that was recognized as a part of it, and even the heart-thumping was delicious.

Carla, who was on her way to Dr. Hunt's study with a reminder from one of the teachers that the time for his opening remarks was at hand, heard the harmonious strains. She paused, her head raised, and her face illumined with the up-

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lift that the message of music always brought her.

She came to herself with a start as the orchestra finished, and gently knocked at the partly-opened study door. The telephone bell tinkled. She waited, thinking Dr. Hunt would tell her to come in as soon as he had answered the call; but she heard no movement. The bell rang again, this time with a jangle.

Carla had always had great curiosity as to how people could talk over wires, and one day the young minister had thoroughly explained it to her. She knew the pupils were absolutely forbidden to answer the telephones; but by a trick of false argument her desire and curiosity convinced her conscience that it was simply duty for her to do so now. They plead with her that there might be an important message for Dr. Hunt which he would lose if she did not take it.

Guided by another decided jangling of the bell she cautiously tip-toed in the direction of the telephone. Feeling along the wall, her hand touched the instrument,

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and she stood still. Remembering Mr. Winston's instruction as to receiver and transmitter, she tried, by stretching her lank frame to the utmost, to bring her lips near to the mouthpiece.

She could not reach it.

Stealthily feeling her way, she found a chair, which, as quietly as possible, she dragged across the floor to a position directly under the telephone, and mounted.

In the meantime Dr. Hunt had proceeded to the chapel. He had but made his introductory remarks when he was called to the telephone-extension on that floor.

Carla, in her eagerness to investigate the workings of the instrument, placed the receiver to her ear just in time to hear Dr. Hunt exclaim in answer to a voice somewhere in the distance—

"Carla's father dead!"

With a shriek she leaped from the chair, falling in a huddled heap on the floor. She was not unconscious; but queerly stunned. As she lay there all sorts of wild scenes flew through her mind. Every little act of

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kindness, every little bit of fatherly love her illiterate parent had bestowed upon her became magnified, and she shook with sobs.

Another strain of music from the concert hall recalled her to the fact that the entertainment was on, and she one of the chief features. In this crucial moment the effect of her environment and Helen's untiring example and instruction proved itself; but not without a struggle. A wild desire possessed her to fly to her squalid home, to throw duty to the wind, and *feel* once more the rugged, familiar features of the only person who had ever been kind to her during her baby and childhood—up to the time the youthful clergyman had found her, and opened the pathway of life to her through her music, and Helen.

The thought of what Helen stood for calmed her. She seemed to again hear her say: "Loving isn't just feelings; sometimes it's doing hard things for your beloved." Her mind went on to the hard thing she now had to do for her beloved. Yes, she would go to the chapel, and do her

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part—do it well, too—do it for her beloved dead, and for principle. God and the school had given her what she knew of music. For God, and the school, and for her dead father, she would give her best. The up-lift again sat upon her features, changing the drawn lines into a beautiful contour.

Dr. Hunt, in search of her, met her at the door.

“Carla,—” he commenced tenderly; but she very quietly interrupted.

“Yes, dear Dr. Hunt. I know. I heard it on the telephone.”

He glanced from the girl to the dangling receiver, and back to her face, with its unearthly beauty.

“I know all,” she went on, “and I’ll do my part, because it is right. For that, for my school—and father. I want to play as I never wanted to play before. God seems to be sending me messages that I can only tell through my violin.”

“But, Carla—” he anxiously commenced again.

“I can, and I must,” she said and was

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on her way to the concert room before he could finish.

Dr. Hunt crossed the room, replaced the receiver in its holder, stood for a few moments with bent head; then turned and followed her to the chapel.

The children acquitted themselves beyond all expectations. The "Three Little Maids from School" came as a surprise. Helen, who was "one little bride, yum, yum," was in white, from the tips of her small slippers to the top of her parasol, including the little fans in her hair. Carla, likewise in pink, with Japanesey designs, and Lillian, in pale blue. As they skipped to the front of the stage, the crowd held its breath; but they were so well trained, that, as Helen said afterward, "they couldn't have skipped one step too far if they had tried to."

They went through the singing, bowing, courtesying and the flirting of their fans and parasols with a grace that would have done credit to "seeing" children. They had finished, and had skipped to the back of the stage, when Lillian, in some un-

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known way, tripped both the other girls, and children, parasols, fans and all tumbled and rolled, a flying mass of color, down the side steps of the stage. But the clapping had started and the appreciation was so apparent that the childish hearts were soon comforted.

While the other numbers of the program were in process, Carla sat a little aside with the pure uplift still elevating her face. Helen missed her from her usual place by her side, and finally found her sitting silently apart. She felt something was amiss; but dared not question further after Carla had answered her first question with:

"I can't explain, Helen; but you will understand—later." She allowed Helen's hand to clasp hers; but with no returning pressure.

The last number of the day's entertainment was Carlo's violin solo. When her name was called, she arose, took her instrument from its case, and lovingly caressed its satin sides before testing the strings. Seemingly unconscious of the crowded

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hall, she walked to the front of the stage, placed her instrument, and played as even she had not known she could play. The violin and the slim girlish form seemed to be welded in one, her arm and the bow rising and falling in rhythmic curves as under the guidance of an Unseen Power.

The teachers who knew her and her ability were astounded, the audience sat spell-bound. On and on she played. After finishing the memorized solo previously prepared, she went from trill and twitter of birds, and purling of playing brooks, to thunder and storm; back to fresh air and blue sky, on and on. Carrying her listeners with her on her aerial flight to dizzy heights, she fell to one last sobbing cry.

In the hush that preceded the volume of applause she fled from the platform and room to her dormitory, elated and frightened by what she had done—elated at the awakening of her inner being, and frightened at the thought that she may have spoiled the program and displeased her teachers.

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The next day staid, old "Bill," hitched to the single buggy, once more took Miss Hicken and Carla to the station from which she was to take the train to her early home, and—to the lifeless body she had been wont to call "Dad."

During the journey Carla was lifted above acute suffering by the elation that held her since she had experienced her struggle and had made her decision in Dr. Hunt's study the day before. Music—her message from God—which had been the strongest bond between herself and her father, bound them by a closer bond than ever before, and she felt that this Great Power that had come to her rendered her capable of being "depended upon" for any duty that might present itself.

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Joyous days were ahead of the blind girl, when she would dawn on the world as, "Carla, the Great Violinist," and the light of the rising sun of her glorious womanhood, now touched the child with healing balm, and she was comforted.

THE END



[The sequel to "Fingers That See" is under construction; and will be ready for the press shortly. It is, in truth, the fulfillment of Carla's womanhood, and tells how from a wandering waif of the city streets, playing for bread for herself and mother, she becomes a woman of fame.]

